Fugitive In San Quentin Murders Possibly In Cuba

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Federal officials said Wednesday they have reason to believe Stephen M. Bingham, charged with five counts of murder in the Aug. 21 San Quentin Prison violence, has fled from California— possibly to Canada or Cuba.

"He's been to Canada on several occasions from where he's gone to Cuba. He's certainly not in California— at least not that we know of," said U.S. Atty. James L. Browning.

Marin County Dist. Atty. James L. Browning.

Marin County Dist. Atty. Bruce Bales filed a murder complaint in San Rafael against Bingham on Tuesday which charged that the 29-year-old lawyer, smuggled a gun to Soledad Brother George Jackson shortly before Jackson pulled a gun on guards. A Municipal Court judge issued a no-bail warrant for Bingham's arrest.

Jackson, 29, was killed by tower guards in what prison officials described as an abortive escape attempt. Bingham is charged with the murders of the five others who died in the violence— three guards and two inmates, all white.

The FBI launched a nationwide search for Bingham on Wednesday after U.S. Magistrate Owen E. Woodruff Jr. signed a federal fugitive warrant for his arrest. He also signed a complaint charging Bingham with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

In an affidavit accompanying the complaint, FBI Special Agent Lance D. Samuelson said the state office of Criminal Identification and Investigation "has made all reasonable and diligent efforts to locate Bingham in California without success."

The affidavit said Bingham had not been seen in California since Aug. 21 and that an examination of U.S. State Department records showed he holds a valid passport.

A federal source disclosed that Marin County authorities have received an unconfirmed report that Bingham was seen with another individual in Wisconsin after the violence— possibly enroute to Canada.

Federal officials said if there were reasons to believe Bingham was in Canada, the FBI would ask the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to help locate him.

Since the United States has no diplomatic relations with Cuba, finding him there would be a different story.

Bales said Bingham was the last and only person to visit Jackson Aug. 21 and "there was no other way George Jackson could have obtained the death gun except through his visit with attorney Stephen Bingham."